

Safety Alert

Winches and Guarding

INSIST ON SAFETY

Information Summary

A recent legal judgement **as a result of an accident**, has clarified the requirement for guarding and safe working positions where there is a risk of being entangled in the moving parts of winching machinery.

An example is the Syncrofalke Skyline System similar to the one being used in the photograph opposite, manufactured in Austria, with a CE mark but without guarding for the main cable drum.

During normal winch operations when extracting trees, the operator is situated inside a cab as seen at the end of the lorry in the photo. As such the operator is protected by his work position.

However, while dismantling the cables to move the skyline to a new position, the main cable requires to be wound onto the main winch drum as seen in the photo opposite. The operator is required to leave the cab and stand to the side of the main drum and use a guide pin to ensure that the cable is wound onto the drum evenly. The manufacturer advises that the operator must stand to the side of the winch drum and operators have been trained that this is the safe working position. **THIS IS NOT SAFE, as it is foreseeable that the operator might stand in front of the winch drum and come into contact with the revolving drum of the winch.**

The judgement also makes it clear that not only employers but also “quasi-employers” (those with sufficient control to suspend or stop an operation) have a duty to ensure such equipment is either guarded or that the operator is protected by his work position.

The Arboriculture and Forestry Industry Guidance document (AFAG) 504 for extraction using a Skyline/Cable Crane System covers various operations including setting up, operating and dismantling the equipment.

Clause 34 of the document in relation to the safety of the operator states: *“All operators must be protected either by their work position or by guarding”*.

This statement links in with the regulations that are in place within the UK relating to the provision of work equipment and how it will be used.

These regulations are known as the **Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998**. There are other regulations which apply to machinery manufactured and supplied within the European Union and these regulations are called the **Supply of Machinery Regulations 2008**.



AFAG 504





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Winches and Guarding – continued

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PUWER Regulation 11 Machinery Guarding

(Dangerous parts of machinery) States:

(1) Every employer shall ensure that measures are taken in accordance with paragraph (2) which are effective –

(a) to prevent access to any dangerous part of machinery or to any rotating stock-bar;

All guards and protection devices provided shall –

- be suitable for the purpose for which they are provided;
- be of good construction, sound material and adequate strength;
- be maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.

Regulation 11 (3) (b):

Guards must be capable of doing the job they are intended to do. Several factors can be considered:

(a) material of construction (metal, plastic, laminated glass etc);

(b) form of the material (sheet, open mesh, bars etc);

(c) method of fixing.

Foreseeable use and misuse should be taken into account.

Guards can be fixed permanently or can be removable to allow for maintenance operations etc., but must be in place when equipment is operating.

Action for Contractors with Skylines and Winches

1. All contractors operating Skyline/Cable Crane and Winch Equipment must review their safe systems of work.
2. They must assess whether there is a foreseeable risk that during ALL stages of operating the equipment including assembly or dismantling as well as general operating, it may be possible for the operator (or anyone else) to be entangled in the mechanisms.
3. If there is a possibility that this could happen, contractors must prevent access to the moving parts by fitting barriers or by constructing or obtaining **suitable** machine guards and fitting them to the equipment.

Please Note: When you are making the above assessment, you cannot rely on the manufacturers' handbook or that the equipment may have been manufactured without guarding and carries a CE mark.

Action for Managers and Supervisors

1. All Managers and Supervisors should recognise that Skyline/Cable Crane and Winch Equipment is a potentially high risk operation and should supervise it accordingly.
2. If there is a foreseeable risk of entanglement, work should be stopped until a safe system of work is put in place where the operator is protected by his work position, or a barrier or suitable guard is installed.
3. Check that operators have the relevant training, certification and competency to operate the equipment.

All actions by Contractors, Managers and Supervisors to be completed by the end of May 2012.